



KLICKITAT WILDLIFE AREA 2009 MANAGEMENT PLAN UPDATE

Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife

Land Management Summary

This is an update to the 2006 Klickitat Wildlife Area Management Plan that provides management direction for this wildlife Area. The plan identifies needs and guides activities on the area based on the Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife (WDFW) mission of “*Sound Stewardship of Fish and Wildlife*” and its underlying statewide goals and objectives as they apply to local conditions. The 2006 Klickitat Wildlife Area Management Plan may be viewed online at:



http://wdfw.wa.gov/lands/wildlife_areas/management_plans/

The Klickitat Wildlife Area is comprised of several units. Most of the units share similar elements in habitat and recreational values, but have different management priorities according to the specific character of the unit location. The largest unit, the Soda Springs Unit, is approximately 13,000 acres in size and is managed primarily as a deer winter range. It also provides access to the Klickitat River for steelhead and salmon fishing and supports a strong population of wild turkeys. Deer and turkey hunting are the primary recreational uses of this unit. Western gray squirrels (Washington State threatened species) are also present and are a priority species for management. Land purchases for the Soda Springs Unit began in 1948 and continued into the 1990's. The Mineral Springs Unit, Dillacort Canyon Unit, Fisher Hill Unit, and other smaller parcels are located in the Klickitat River Canyon and serve to protect fish habitat and provide access for fishing. They are distributed downstream from the Soda Springs Unit almost to the mouth of the Klickitat River. Collectively these units encompass more than 800 acres. They also offer limited access for turkey and deer hunting. The Mineral Springs Unit features an old building that has been retained by WDFW as an important communal roosting site for Vaux's swifts. The Goldendale Hatchery Unit is 240 acres in size (excluding the hatchery facilities)

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and has been managed as a pheasant release site and for trout fishing. The Sondino Unit, on the plateau adjacent to the Columbia River, now totals approximately 211 acres. This unit is a conservation area managed specifically for western pond turtles, which are a Washington State endangered species. Purchases of parcels for this unit began in 1992 and continue to the present. A new unit, the Swale Creek Unit, was added in 2007. This 516-acre unit straddles the Klickitat Trail, which is owned and managed by Washington State Parks. It was established to furnish additional upland bird hunting opportunities and to maintain streamside and upland habitat for fish and wildlife.

Plans are updated annually as habitat and species conditions change, as new regulations and scientific knowledge develop, as public issues and concerns evolve, and as administration of wildlife areas change. This management plan update also includes 2008 accomplishments, new issues, new land management strategies, and performance measures for 2009.

Updates/Changes

Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife has been involved in land exchange negotiations with Washington Department of Natural Resources for at least three years. Several parcels that belong to DNR but that have been managed as part of WDFW's Klickitat Wildlife Area were to be acquired by WDFW as part of the statewide land exchange proposal. In February 2009, the Wildlife Area Manager was notified that the part of the proposal that involved the Klickitat Wildlife Area was dropped from the planned exchange. WDFW will continue to lease these parcels from DNR for wildlife rangeland.

WDFW began developing a Habitat Conservation Plan for the wildlife areas in 2006. While the purpose of habitat conservation on the wildlife areas would seem to be self-evident, land management practices may benefit certain species at the expense of others, and the agency wishes to minimize the unintended negative consequences of these activities. In addition, public use of WDFW lands for outdoor recreation is extensive and these activities may be resulting in negative impacts. Federal funding sources want assurance that WDFW has given careful consideration to the effects of land management and recreation activities. Therefore, WDFW has compiled a list of priority species and a list of human activities that occur on agency lands and is in the process of mapping when and where these species and activities occur. This will allow the agency to evaluate the potential for activities to both negatively and positively impact wildlife and rare plants. Most of the wildlife areas in Region 5, including the Klickitat Wildlife Area, were inventoried for species and activities in 2008. Inventories statewide should be complete in 2009 and the Habitat Conservation Plan is projected for completion in 2010.

A new unit of the wildlife area was established in 2007 with the purchase of approximately 516 acres along Swale Creek. The creek and the Klickitat Trail pass through the property from east to west, and the Centerville Highway borders the south edge. Riparian habitat will be maintained along the creek to benefit fish and wildlife and upland habitat is expected to furnish bird hunting opportunities. This unit was impacted by unpermitted livestock grazing in 2008, particularly along Swale Creek. Fencing is needed to protect the area from livestock. Parking is also needed on the site. A property line survey has been completed and a cultural resource survey of the proposed fencelines is to be performed this spring. New fence construction is

planned for sometime this year, along with posting of signs to mark the public property lines. Construction of a parking area and trailhead facility is postponed until funds for this development are secured.

New Issues

Initiation of a forest habitat improvement project is planned for this spring on the Soda Springs Unit. The National Wild Turkey Federation (NWTF) and WDFW have been engaged in a discussion about habitat enhancement projects for diverse wildlife species on the Klickitat Wildlife Area for about a year. Turkeys utilize a variety of habitats and projects that benefit turkeys can also benefit other priority species in our area. Thinning of small-diameter trees along key roads and a few 2 to 5 acre “patch” treatments in primarily oak stands should provide wildfire fuels reduction in addition to the desired forest health and habitat improvement. The slash is to be chipped. Special emphasis will be on oak stands, with encouragement of structural diversity as a priority. Selected merchantable (conifer) trees may be cut down or girdled if they are encroaching on other shade-intolerant trees deemed to be more valuable from a wildlife habitat perspective. The project is to be limited in extent so it will fit the parameters of a Class I Forest Practice. Forest practice foresters from Washington Department of Natural Resources have visited the site and provided guidance on how to comply with these rules. NWTF will furnish part of the funds and personnel for the project. The long-term strategy is to accomplish the work incrementally over a ten-year time span. This allows WDFW and NWTF to assess the results and make adjustments if needed for the next season’s work. It also limits the impacts of disturbance to a localized area each year, and for a shorter term, as opposed to completing the whole project in one year. Recognizing that treated areas will require periodic maintenance, the maintenance can occur incrementally over several years as well.

Fishermen have requested that a public fishing pond be established in the Goldendale area. It has been several years since Pothole Lake, which is on private land, was closed due to ongoing abuse of the property by visitors. In summer 2008, two sites on the Goldendale Hatchery Unit were considered for creation of a new fishing pond. The site selected for further consideration is adjacent to the Goldendale Trout Hatchery. WDFW Fish Biologist Weinheimer has applied for funding to make the necessary improvements and is working with Washington Department of Ecology to develop solutions to address specific concerns associated with an existing pond. The projected timeframe for opening the pond to public use is summer 2009. The WDFW Fish program manages the Goldendale Trout Hatchery along with a corridor of streamside habitat along Spring Creek to maintain and promote fishing opportunities. The remainder of the WDFW land on the Hatchery Unit is managed by Wildlife program as part of the Klickitat Wildlife Area.

Major Stewardship Accomplishments

Control of noxious weeds was undertaken more aggressively during the 2008 season. Target species and locations were:

- Diffuse and spotted knapweed – Soda Springs Unit, Dillacort Canyon Unit
- Yellow starthistle – Sondino Unit
- Canada thistle – Goldendale Hatchery Unit, Soda Springs Unit
- Himalayan blackberry – Sondino Unit
- Reed canarygrass - Soda Springs Unit

Carefully selected herbicides were employed in this effort, and so far, the results appear to be good. Some infestations will require more applications. In the course of checking the treated sites, other weed patches were discovered. These will be added to the treatment plan for 2009. The Goldendale Hatchery Unit hosts extensive infestations of reed canarygrass and bachelor buttons. An intensive effort will be required to eradicate these weeds. Due to time and budget constraints, control of those infestations is postponed until 2010 or 2011.

Further progress was made on bringing wildlife area roads into compliance with forest practice standards. The two highest priority issues for remediation on the Klickitat Wildlife Area were a ford in a tributary of Bowman Creek and a bridge across Dead Canyon Creek. In September, the ford and the approaches to the crossing were armored with rock to prevent silt delivery into the stream. The creek was dry at the time the work was completed. The matter of the bridge across Dead Canyon Creek took an unexpected turn. In the course of conducting research needed for the process of evaluating the scale of the project, it was discovered that WDFW does not own the old railroad bridge across Dead Canyon Creek. Instead, WDFW owns the newer Haul Road bridge farther downstream. A review of the land ownership records shows that the old railroad right-of-way was owned by a timber company. When the timber company wanted to realign the road and construct a bridge for trucks near the mouth of Dead Canyon Creek, it acquired an easement from the landowner, the Washington Game Department. The term of the easement was ten years. The easement was renewed once or twice while the private Haul Road was in use. After the 1996 flood destroyed part of the road, the company decided not to repair it. At some point, the easement was allowed to lapse. Presently, the old railroad bridge and most of the Haul Road is owned by a nonprofit conservation organization. Now that ownership of the lower bridge has reverted to WDFW, the agency is evaluating whether the bridge poses a significant concern in regards to fish habitat. Regardless, it is generally agreed that the bridge will need to remain in place for at least a few years, until access is no longer needed for habitat restoration projects downstream on the Klickitat River.

Department of Natural Resources again offered the services of fire crews for projects on the wildlife area during summer 2008. This was the second season local fire crews have worked in campgrounds on the wildlife area. Their efforts were directed toward fixing up the Canyon Creek and the Leidl Park Campgrounds. The Canyon Creek campground is a favorite among deer and turkey hunters, but it receives no dedicated funding for maintenance, unlike the access sites along the Klickitat River, which do receive limited funds for maintenance. Both campgrounds had become overgrown with young trees and shrubs and sight distance was limited. The DNR crews trimmed, collected, and piled material. The smaller limbs and tree tops were chipped by the Washington Conservation Corps (WCC), and the larger pieces were piled. The Canyon Creek Campground was cleaned up nicely by early summer and a good start was made at Leidl Park. Visitors to these campgrounds have expressed appreciation for the work done by these crews.

The WCC crew performed a variety of maintenance chores and projects on the wildlife area. The most ambitious of these was a fuels reduction project. This project involved the thinning of small diameter trees and shrubs around the perimeter of the wildlife area headquarters. The project served as training in following the fire prescription, as well as providing experience in

planning the work for maximum efficiency. Next, the crew began thinning a strip of forest along Anderson Rd. Approximately .25 mile of the western roadside was thinned, starting just south of the junction with the Soda Springs Rd. The slash was chipped by the WCC crew. A significant reduction in fuels was achieved and the results are aesthetically pleasing. Unfortunately, during the time that project was underway, the fire danger rose so high that DNR felt it prudent to shut down operation of tools such as chainsaws and chippers during some or all normal work hours. This restricted the amount of work the crew was able to accomplish.

Status Report of 2008 Performance Measures

A list of performance measures is reviewed each year for purposes of evaluating and reporting progress on the management plan. Many of the performance measures will be on the list for several years because they require a long-term effort to achieve the desired result. A report on each calendar year's accomplishments will be included in the annual management plan update. Issues that interfere with accomplishment of these goals will be noted and may necessitate adjustment of the performance measures for the following year.

2008 Performance Measure	Status of Performance Measure	Explanation of Progress/ 2009 Related Activity/ Comments
1. Maintain 154 acres in alfalfa and wheat.	Accomplished	Most of the acreage is in wheat. These fields were fallow in spring and summer. A new crop was planted in fall.
2. Establish a new agricultural lease on the Goldendale Hatchery Unit to furnish habitat for pheasants.	Incomplete	District team members have visited the site and support the proposal. More input needs to be gathered from local farmers to structure a lease agreement that would be economically viable.
3. Renew existing grazing permit.	Accomplished	This permit will be in effect through June 2013.
4. Plan forest habitat project, for review in fall 2008. This is presently envisioned as	In progress	Early input from Department of Natural Resources confirmed that the fuel load

2008 Performance Measure	Status of Performance Measure	Explanation of Progress/ 2009 Related Activity/ Comments
mostly a pre-commercial thinning (few merchantable trees taken) followed by prescribed burns.		must be reduced before prescribed burning can be conducted. A collaborative effort among DNR, WDFW, and the National Wild Turkey Federation has resulted in development of a satisfactory prescription for thinning to be implemented in spring 2009. The project is to be accomplished over several years. Prescribed burning is postponed until it can be undertaken with reasonable assurance that it will produce the desired effect.
5. Cut down dead, standing pine trees in Canyon Creek Loop Campground to mitigate public safety issues. Reduce fire hazard by thinning shrubs and small trees in campground, and chipping or burning the debris.	Accomplished	
6. Restore native shrubs along Spring Creek. Extend shrub corridor 100 ft., at minimum.	Incomplete	Timing of the work was changed from spring to fall in an attempt to improve shrub survival. This did not mesh well with volunteer availability. The wildlife area manager did an experimental planting of aspen, mock orange, and blue elderberry along Spring Creek in early December. These will be monitored for survival during summer 2009.

2008 Performance Measure	Status of Performance Measure	Explanation of Progress/ 2009 Related Activity/ Comments
7. Maintain and repair upland water sources. Clean all guzzler reservoirs at least twice during the year.	Mostly accomplished	All the guzzlers were cleaned once. A few guzzlers need repairs but all are serviceable.
8. Conduct surveys of black-tailed deer and monitor western pond turtle population at Sondino Unit. Conduct mourning dove survey for nationwide survey effort in May. Survey for western gray squirrels as needed in relation to forest thinning project. Survey for bighorn sheep and elk during deer survey effort, if opportunity arises.	Accomplished, except for the western gray squirrel survey. This will be done before forest thinning work commences.	A band of elk were observed during a deer survey in December. No bighorn sheep were seen. A western gray squirrel survey is to be performed shortly before the thinning project commences.
9. Secure funding for Icehouse chimney repair.	Not done	A proposal was submitted to the Washington Wildlife and Recreation Program in summer 2008 but funding was not awarded.
10. Construct new fence at Sondino Unit to exclude livestock.	In progress	A Land Use Application for new fence construction has been submitted to the Columbia River Gorge Commission for review. A labor crew has been scheduled and materials purchased. Work will commence pending approval by the Gorge Commission.
11. Prioritize areas for weed control treatment. Consult with Klickitat County Noxious Weed Control Coordinator to	Accomplished	Known infestations of Canada thistle, diffuse knapweed, spotted knapweed, yellow starthistle, and Himalayan

2008 Performance Measure	Status of Performance Measure	Explanation of Progress/ 2009 Related Activity/ Comments
identify most urgent needs and methods of treatment, for action in 2008.		blackberries were treated. Two small patches of reed canarygrass were also treated.
12. Perform fire hazard abatement work, such as piling limbs in forested areas for winter burning.	Accomplished	The WCC crew constructed 8 piles of limbs and down wood along Anderson Road and Old Headquarters Road. Additionally, 18 piles of limbs were stacked by the contractor who cut down the hazardous trees along the access road to the Canyon Creek Campground. One pile was used up by hunters during the fall/winter hunting seasons, and several others reduced in size for campfires. Twenty-three piles were burned by WDFW. Thinning of brush and small trees was performed by the WCC crew around the KWA Headquarters and along Anderson Road. Most of this material was disposed of by chipping. DNR fire crews did similar work in the Canyon Creek Campground and Leidl Campground. The WCC crew chipped slash in the campgrounds as well.
13. Plan for bringing the wells on the Mineral Springs Unit into compliance with state law by maintaining or decommissioning them, and identify a funding source for the work.	Status unknown	A Capital Budget Request was submitted to WDFW's Engineering Division. Engineering Division will discuss the issue with Department of Ecology.

2008 Performance Measure	Status of Performance Measure	Explanation of Progress/ 2009 Related Activity/ Comments
14. Address stream-crossing issues identified in KWA's Road Maintenance and Abandonment Plan. Bring the ford in the creek up to standards. Continue the planning and funding process for mitigation or removal of the railroad bridge on Dead Canyon Creek.	Accomplished	The ford as well as the approaches to it were armored with rock to prevent silt delivery into the stream. Research revealed that the old railroad bridge does not belong to WDFW, and therefore should not have been part of the KWA Road Management and Abandonment Plan.
15. Reduce disturbance to wildlife in sensitive areas and times by continuing seasonal road closures.	Accomplished	
16. Construct new fencing as needed on the Swale Creek Unit.	Not done	The property lines were surveyed in Nov. and Dec. 2009. The property lines do not match with the locations of the old fences in several areas. Two miles of new fence will need to be built to exclude livestock from the property. An archaeological resource assessment of the proposed fenceline has been performed and WDFW is waiting to hear whether modifications to the fence design will be required to protect cultural resources.
17. Create maps of the Sondino, Neth, and Fisher Hill Units. Write new sections for the management plan describing special management strategies for the satellite units.	Incomplete	Property lines were hand-drawn on topographic maps of all units of the Klickitat Wildlife Area in early 2009 for management use. Special management strategies for the satellite units of the KWA have not yet been written.

2008 Performance Measure	Status of Performance Measure	Explanation of Progress/ 2009 Related Activity/ Comments
18. Investigate alternatives and costs for improved human waste disposal on the Wildlife Area during hunting seasons.	Mostly done	The majority of hunters visiting KWA in the last three years camped in trailers. The people interviewed about whether they would use some type of waste collection service indicated that they probably would not use it (there would have to be a charge). The KWA manager has found that tent campers do use one campground where no permanent toilet facility exists. A portable toilet will be placed there during hunting seasons this year.

New Strategies

The wildlife area plan identifies many strategies or activities to address the agency's strategic plan goals and objectives, why the area was purchased, habitat conditions, species presence, and public issues and concerns. The following updated strategies have been added to respond to previously unaddressed or new issues or changes on the wildlife area. New strategies may also be in response to adaptive management as staff evaluate the effects of past management activities.

Agency Objective: Protect, Restore & Enhance Fish and Wildlife and Their Habitats

1. Manage for Species Diversity

A. Strategy: Initiation of a forest habitat improvement project for the Soda Springs Unit.

2. Protect and Restore Riparian Habitat

B. Fencing is needed to protect the Swale Creek area from livestock. Parking is also needed at the site. Construction of a parking area and trailhead facility is postponed until funds are secured.

2009 Performance Measures

1. Continue to work on forest habitat project to improve habitat for priority species, improve forest health, and reduce fire hazard.

2. Establish a new agricultural lease on the Goldendale Hatchery Unit to furnish habitat for pheasants.

3. Construct new fence on Sondino Unit to exclude livestock.
4. Construct new fencing on the Swale Creek Unit to exclude livestock and define public property lines.
5. Implement weed control treatment in areas of known infestations.
6. Initiate the forest habitat improvement project on the Soda Springs Unit.
7. Restore native shrubs and trees along Spring Creek. This will occur incrementally over several years with help from volunteers.
8. Address livestock trespass issues on the wildlife area. Work with neighbors to develop ways to control movement of livestock as needed.
9. Maintain and repair upland water sources. Clean all guzzler reservoirs at least once during the year.
10. Monitor range and water sources in association with grazing permit.
11. Conduct surveys of black-tailed deer and monitor western pond turtle population at Sondino Unit. Conduct mourning dove survey for nationwide survey effort in May. Survey for western gray squirrels, as needed in relation to forest thinning project. Survey for bighorn sheep and elk during deer survey effort if opportunity arises.
12. Determine whether Vaux's swifts still roost in the Icehouse chimney and research feasibility of repair of the structure.
13. Improve public safety and reduce soil erosion and other impacts of inappropriate road use by closing a section of the Sheep Canyon Road and short spur road off the Sheep Canyon Road.
14. Reduce disturbance to wildlife in sensitive areas and times by continuing seasonal road closures.
15. Design and implement a plan for limiting the sprawl of camping activity along the Grayback and Sheep Canyon Roads. This is necessary to stop the spread of soil compaction and damage to range plants.
16. Write new sections for the management plan describing special management strategies for the satellite units.
17. Scan current maps showing the boundaries of the Soda Springs Unit, Mineral Springs Unit, Goldendale Hatchery Unit, Dillacort Unit, and Fisher Hill Unit, and post them on the internet as .pdf files available for downloading.

Citizens Advisory Group and District Team Input

A meeting with the Citizen Advisory Group was held April 23, 2009 to review progress on the 2008 Performance Measures and discuss new ideas. WDFW District Team members provided comments through internal communication. These ideas and suggestions are presented below. Input from the wildlife area manager and District Team is included. Only the Performance Measures that generated discussion are listed.

Input On the 2008 Performance Measures:

1. CAG members suggested that the best chance of designing a successful agricultural lease on the Goldendale Hatchery Unit would be to meet with experienced farmers who operate on acreage nearby and incorporate their recommendations into the farming plan and lease agreement. Repair of the fences surrounding the WDFW property could be part of the terms of the lease. Development of better habitat for pheasants and repair of fences could both be accomplished through the same agreement. In order for this arrangement to be attractive to an operator, the lease would need to be fairly long-term, perhaps ten years in duration.
2. One member of the CAG noted that there is a local operator who has a machine that is capable of thinning and mulching woody material very efficiently. This might be an alternative for quickly and economically creating fuel breaks on the wildlife area.
3. A CAG member indicated that he may be able to help by documenting new observations of swifts using the chimney. This information would be useful in supporting the Department's assertion that the chimney is important habitat worth saving.

The wildlife area manager plans to survey for swifts as the opportunity arises during the month of May. However time is limited and additional help would be appreciated. The Vaux's swift survey coordinator for Washington State has requested that surveys be conducted each Saturday in May, to detect use of communal roosting sites during the spring migration. Late summer/early fall surveys are also planned.

4. The CAG is pleased that progress has been made on weed issues. It was pointed out that initiation of a new agricultural lease on the Goldendale Hatchery Unit would be a very effective tool against the weed infestation in the fields there.

The wildlife area manager agrees that weed control is extra incentive to establish an active lease on the Hatchery Unit.

5. The CAG observed that current maps could be scanned and posted on the agency's website for downloading by interested viewers. This would be much less expensive than publishing hardcopies of maps. It would also be easier to make corrections or revisions. Once useful and popular versions of the maps have been developed, these could be submitted for publication later on.

New concerns and action items were also discussed. Items in italics were posed by WDFW.

- *WDFW staff have discussed the possibility of introducing a road closure on the Grayback Road or the Sheep Canyon Road to reduce the incidence of off-road driving while the soil is soft, and reduce unlawful hunting and general disturbance of deer during winter. It is recognized that a closure would also restrict other legitimate recreational uses of the road. Therefore, the CAG was asked for their thoughts on this issue.*

The CAG discussed the benefits and drawbacks of a potential road closure, including the placement of gates. There are only two locations where a new gate would be an effective barrier. One location is at the lower end of the Grayback Road, about 0.1 miles above its intersection with the Glenwood Highway. The other location is on the Sheep Canyon Road, approximately 2 miles above its intersection with the Grayback Road. The group did not support placement of a gate at the lower end of the Grayback Road. However, they agreed that a closure on the Sheep Canyon Road would provide important benefits. The group felt that it would afford better hunting opportunities and limit abuses of the area. Additionally, the CAG indicated that a permanent closure of the upper end of the Sheep Canyon Road would be preferable to a seasonal closure. The group is aware that the area above Sheep Canyon experiences a higher rate of unlawful activity and that the rangeland and road are both exhibiting signs of degradation due to the level of use there. Public safety is also a concern, since there is a 0.5 mile section of road that is only wide enough for one vehicle at a time. When two vehicles meet going opposite directions, one must back up on this steep and narrow road to reach a wide spot where the two can pass. The CAG indicated that the benefits of closing this section of road to vehicle travel would far outweigh the drawbacks.

- *A short road that intersects the Sheep Canyon Road about 1.8 miles up from its intersection with the Grayback Road has become heavily eroded due to public use of the road regardless of wet soil conditions. Users have driven alongside the road to climb the hill at the lower end of the road, and continue to expand the area of ground being driven upon. This is causing increased soil compaction, erosion, and damage to the plant community in this area. Also, the area accessed by this road seems prone to unlawful activity due to its seclusion from view. This road is already closed to vehicles about 0.25 miles in, and is not maintained. The CAG was asked whether they would support a seasonal or year-round closure of this road.*

The CAG favors a permanent closure of the road to be implemented at the same time as the closure on the Sheep Canyon Road.

- *An agricultural lease on the Soda Springs Unit will expire in fall 2009. Given that farming carries economic costs and certain environmental impacts in addition to the benefits of forage production for wildlife, the CAG was asked for their sense of public support for continuing farming practices on the Soda Springs Unit.*

The CAG generally supports farming as a means of providing forage for wildlife,

particularly in areas that are already under cultivation. One group member provided detailed information on the suitability of the fields for continued farming. Certain fields are poor in quality due to rockiness and sloping ground. These might be best converted to a combination of perennial grasses and native forbs. Other fields are good for farming and the group desires to keep these in agricultural use. Deer and other wildlife utilize these fields extensively, which indicates that farming provides a high value benefit. One member suggested that it would be good to resume cultivation of the forage plots situated along the South Breaks Road, on the Soda Springs Unit, to encourage animals to disperse more as they utilize these food sources.

- *WDFW finds that one of the best ways of securing land for habitat conservation and public enjoyment is to purchase it from willing sellers. Many of the parcels that are potentially available for purchase are presently grazed by livestock part of the year. The group was asked whether the Klickitat Wildlife Area should continue using grazing as a management tool on newly acquired parcels, if past grazing practices on the property have not had a detrimental effect.*

The CAG responded that the answer would depend on the forage production potential of the site and observations of the range quality trend. Proper management of the range is critical. This includes assessment of the range plant community, soil conditions, and other variables that play into the intensity and timing of grazing activity that can be sustained.

- The Citizen Advisory Group believes that if a new trailhead is developed to serve the Klickitat Trail in the upper Swale Creek area, the best location would be along Harms Road. The original proposal was to place a trailhead on WDFW land adjacent to the Centerville Highway. Creation of a parking lot, construction of restrooms, and other improvements were planned by Washington State Parks. However, this location is near an area that is attractive for hunting, which could lead to conflicts among users. Also, the soil conditions and open nature of the rangeland in the proposed parking lot location could result in higher costs for construction and invite abuse of the area by off-road drivers. By placing the trailhead along Harms Road instead, visitors would continue to use a location that is already generally known. The effort of changing the pattern of public use could be avoided. Also, it would likely be easier to contain motor vehicles to the intended parking area.
- *The Wildlife Area Manager has observed that people camping along the Grayback and Sheep Canyon Roads are tending to move into relatively undisturbed areas to set up camp rather than use areas that have already been affected by camping. This means that soil compaction and trampling of forage plants is increasing and compromising the quality of the range. Also, as people move their camps into the oak forest; more instances are being observed where campfires are built in unsafe places, too close to tree cover. It is apparent that the manager will have to take a more active role in designating where people may camp and enforcing these measures.*

The CAG was invited to list ten priority activities that WDFW should undertake, without regard to the current level of funding. The list developed by the group is as follows:

1. Initiate a new agricultural lease on the Goldendale Hatchery Unit. Make 1-1/2 miles of fence repair or reconstruction part of the terms of performance of the lease, and offer use of the land in exchange for this work.
2. Continue farming Fields 2, 3, and 4 on the Soda Springs Unit. Put Fields 1, 5, and 6 into the Conservation Reserve Program. Avoid a break in agricultural practices in order to maintain weed control.
3. Re-establish the forage plots along the South Breaks Road.
4. Acquire an easement or purchase land along Harms Road for a new, larger trailhead development to serve users of the Klickitat Trail and adjacent WDFW lands.
5. Order an inspection of the chimney of the old Icehouse building on the Mineral Springs Unit, determine if and how the chimney can be repaired. If it can be repaired, get estimates of the cost.
6. Implement a closure of the Sheep Canyon Road about 2 miles up from its junction with the Grayback Road. This could include improvement of the existing turn-around area at that point and delineation of a vehicle parking area alongside the road.
7. Facilitate more study of the flora of the wildlife area, as well as other natural history subjects.

Want to see the full plan?

Go to:

http://wdfw.wa.gov/lands/wildlife_areas/management_plans/

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